THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) Government of India have not received any such report.

(b) Worldover it is acknowledged as one of the rich Mangrove areas with exciting biodiversity covering wide range of species of both plants and animals.

(c) and (d) Bhitarkanika, Mahanadi, Subernrekha, Devi, Dhamra and Chilka Mangrove areas in Orissa have been identified by Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests for intensive conservation and management. Financial assistance is extended to the State Government for implementation of Management action Plans on all the identified Mangrove areas. In the aftermath of Super Cyclone in Orissa during October, 1999 Ministry has extended financial assistance to Government of Orissa for establishment of National Mangrove Genetic Resource Centre in the State. According to the State of Forest Report (1999) an increase of 20 sq. km. of Mangrove cover has been reported in Orissa during 1995—1999.

Death of Olive Ridley Turtles

4379. SHRI SURENDRA LATH : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have investigated into the causes of the death of the Olive Ridley Sea Turtles in Orissa;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the approximate number of sea turtles died in the State during the last three years; and

(c) the steps taken to give proper protection to these rare species?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) and (b) The major causes of death of the Olive Ridley Sea Turtles in Orissa are as under :

1. Injury due to collision with mechanized trawlers/boats.

2. Suffocation after getting entangled in the fishing nets.

The details of the sea turtles reported found dead in Orissa during last three years are as under :

Year	Number of turtles found dead
2000-2001	5,483
2001-2002	12,977
2002-2003	8,464

(c) The steps taken to effectively protect sea turtles include :

1. Olive Ridley Turtle is listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and thus is being provided highest degree of protection under law.
2. Territorial water and Gahirmatha coast where largest congregation of turtles takes place for egg laying has been declared as a sanctuary.
3. Fishing by trawlers and other mechanized fishing vessels has been banned upto 5 km stretch from the shore line as per the provisions of the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1982.
4. The seaward side upto a distance of 20 kms from Jatadhar mouth to Devi, and, mouth of Chilika to Rusikulya mouth, has been declared as "No fishing zone".
5. Assistance of Coast Guards has been sought to prevent illegal entry of mechanized fishing vessels in areas banned for fishing.
6. Additional staff and local villagers are deployed to strengthen the protection measures during the nesting season.

Mercury pollution

4380. SHRI SURESH KALMADI :

SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the report released by the UNEP mercury pollution causing various deformities like chromosomal anomalies and other major deformities among the population;